

ART. XI.—*On a Simple Dressing for Recent Burns.* By JOHN H. PACKARD, M.D., of Philadelphia.

IN the spring of 1853, while an officer of the Philadelphia City Dispensary, in Fifth Street, I was called one day to attend a German manufacturer of fancy soaps, in the neighborhood, who had been severely burnt over the face, one arm, and the side, by the blazing up of a quantity of alcohol. I visited him for several days, using from the outset the "carron oil," or mixture of linseed oil and limewater, as I had been taught. But this failed to allay his pain, even with the aid of anodynes given internally; and becoming dissatisfied, he dismissed me, and procured the services of an old friend of his, formerly a surgeon in the Austrian army. On my seeing him a short time afterwards, he told me that his friend had given him immediate relief by the application of fresh lard; and the appearance of the injured parts was indeed surprisingly favorable.

Bearing this case in mind, I made trial of the plan suggested as soon as an opportunity offered itself, and was so well satisfied with the result that I continued its use. Since that time there have come under my care a great many cases of burns and scalds of all degrees of extent and severity; but none in which the simple dressing above mentioned has not answered well. It has repeatedly, I do not know how often, occurred to me to see patients who have had other dressings applied, but whose sufferings continued unrelieved until the lard was put on.

Some of these instances have impressed me very forcibly. One was that of a child about 3 years of age, to whom I was accidentally called. He had pulled a kettle of boiling water off a table upon himself, and was badly scalded over the face, upper part of the chest, and arms. His mother had applied linseed oil and limewater, but to no good purpose; he was screaming and crying violently with pain. Some fresh lard having been brought, I dressed his injuries with it, when he immediately ceased crying, and in a few minutes fell into a sound sleep. His recovery was very rapid.

Another case occurred to me a week or two since. A child 4 years old was reaching for some plaything on a mantelpiece over a grate, when his clothes (he was in petticoats) swung out against the fire, and he was instantly in flames. Before the fire could be put out he was burned over both thighs, both arms, the body, the back of the head, and slightly over the face. When I saw him, about two hours afterwards, he was suffering severe pain, and very restless, although dressed with carron oil. As soon, however, as the entire burnt surface was covered with fresh lard, he became easy, and remained so until his death, which took place in about 18 hours from the time of the accident.

As has been already stated, these cases are among very many others

which have come under my notice. They impressed themselves on my mind because of the very marked relief given by the lard when other means had failed. Moreover, in children, we can as a general rule estimate the amount of suffering by the amount of complaint made; whereas, adults will often either exercise self-restraint, or subdue the expression of pain from the mere expectation of speedy relief.

The "carron oil" is well known to the public as well as to the profession; so that it is often applied by the bystanders or friends, in cases of burn, before the arrival of the surgeon. Its use is advocated in preference to that of any other article, in an able paper on the injuries in question, contributed by Dr. John Ashhurst, Jr., to this journal for July, 1862; and this is the only one of the points so well set forth by him, to which I would take exception. The smell of linseed oil is very offensive and sickening, while the limewater, never wholly incorporated with the oil, is apt to evaporate at many points, leaving the linen or other stuff upon which it is spread sticking to the skin. By covering the dressing with oiled silk, we may indeed obviate this annoyance; but oiled silk, although usually at hand in a hospital, is seldom to be had in any quantity in private houses.

What we want to do, in dealing with a burn, as regards local treatment, is simply to protect it altogether from irritation; reference being had here to the early period of the case only, and not to its later stages, when stimulation is often called for. If, therefore, we cover the injured surface with a bland, nonirritating and air-proof medium, our object will be gained. Such a medium I believe to be best furnished by fresh lard.

This material can almost always be procured in any desired quantity, and at the shortest notice. If salted, it can be easily deprived of the salt by washing with water. My own practice is to spread it thickly on pieces of very soft old linen or muslin (old table-cloths are excellent), and then tear off pieces of suitable size to amply cover the affected parts. The great object is to apply the dressing accurately to the surface. For the face, a mask may be readily made of a piece of the spread stuff, the eyelids, or ears, if involved, being first covered with small bits of it. When a limb is concerned, it is better to tear off strips and wrap the part lightly with them, like a common bandage, except that no reverses are made. Or reverses may be made, the surface of each being smeared with the lard before it comes on the skin. As it is impossible to dress burns neatly, we may as well discard at the outset all idea of doing so, and aim wholly at promoting the comfort of the sufferer.

In very warm weather, or when the patient is to remain in a heated atmosphere—an important advantage in almost every case of severe and extensive burns—the lard may be deficient in "body;" it is then necessary to add to it a small proportion of simple cerate. About one part of cerate to four or six of lard will usually answer the purpose.

So much has been written on the treatment of burns, from the earliest times to the present day, that it may seem presumptuous to attempt to throw any new light on the subject. But, so far as my reading goes, the simple dressing I have now advocated has never been more than mentioned by any writer, nor have I met, with any knowledge of it among my professional friends. So completely has it satisfied me, after a very extensive trial, that I feel bound to make its value known to others, confident that they will not be disappointed in its effects.

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ART. XII.—*Bibron's Bromine Mixture an Antidote to the Poison of the Boa Crotaloides.* By CHARLES H. HUGHES, M. D., Surg. 1st Inf. M. S. M. Vols.

MANY reputed antidotes to the poison of the different species of crotalus and other venomous serpents which abound in our country, have, of late years, found their way into the columns of our medical periodicals, each having its complement of zealous advocates ever ready to bear testimony to its efficacy, if not its infallibility.

The Mexican *gallindrinera*, or Euphorbia prostrata; the Asiatic, or Tanjore pill; the diffusive stimulant plan, with hot brandy and water, ammonia, whiskey, or the *eau de luce*; the well-known "Western cure," making the patient drunk; the wine and bark; the galvanic plan, the iodine plan, and the antidote of Bibron, all have had, and many of them still have their earnest votaries.

The efficacy of some of the above remedies has been attested by the recorded experience of men of eminence in the profession, whose statements are entitled to the fullest credence, and it is for the purpose of confirming the statements of the great French naturalist respecting the value of his antidote (the last mentioned), that we ask permission to add our testimony to that of Hammond, Gross, M. De Vesey, and others, by a record of the following case:—

Private William Vinoss, Co. F. 1st Infantry Mo. Vol., Mil., a German, æt. 22, entered regimental hospital July 13th, having been bitten a few hours previously by a genuine specimen of the reptile known in the Western States as the copperhead. The seat of the bite was the extremity of the little finger of the left hand.

Immediately after the reception of the bite, the comrades of the bitten man applied a tight ligature around the finger, a little anterior to the metacarpo-phalangeal articulation, which effectually prevented the venom from mingling with the general circulation, and dosed him with whiskey, but not in sufficient quantities to produce intoxication. In this condition he was brought to the hospital, and on the morning of the fourteenth, the treatment to which we attributed his recovery was instituted.